

## Combat Logistics Battalion-22 CLB-22 Journal

***“Only The Best Will Do”***  
**December 2007**

### **COMMANDING OFFICER**

Happy New Year! January brings some special meaning to the Marines, Sailors and Families of CLB-22. It means we are getting close to completing our missions and returning home to our loved ones. Let me catch you up on our rather busy month.

Aboard Gunston Hall, we spent the majority of the month off the coast of Africa, conducting Maritime Security operations, until it was time to head north to participate in Exercise Image Nautilus, a bilateral exercise with the Djiboutian Armed Forces. We spent 10 days conducting infantry training with the Djiboutian Army, naval training with their Navy and performing some very rewarding community relations, or COMREL projects, in some local villages. The exercise was a huge success; all participants learned some great lessons, taught some great lessons and took a step toward understanding another country's military and people. The COMREL teams went out in some very impoverished native villages and repaired life-sustaining water distribution systems, and repaired and painted a local school. You would be so proud to the achievements of your Marines and Sailors. There is something so rewarding and humbling about helping those less fortunate, and the smiles of the local children made it all worthwhile. After the exercise, we took the opportunity to conduct a detailed agricultural wash down of all of the embarked equipment. This task is normally done in a port facility ashore, but we did it on ship and the result was over

83% of all Marine equipment was certified by US Customs agents to return to the US. The Marines and Sailors worked day and night, and their motivation and results paid huge dividends. What a team we have here!

Your Marines aboard Ponce and Kearsarge had some quality port visits in Bahrain and another port in the Middle East, following their participation and support of some high level diplomatic events in the 5<sup>th</sup> Fleet AOR. The Kearsarge arrived back after its long journey from Bangladesh, supporting the Humanitarian crisis there. Across the board, your CLB 22 Marines and Sailors have truly made a mark in both the Central Command (CENTCOM) and Pacific Command (PACOM) areas of responsibility. We have been spread across the whole region and all accomplished every task and mission at hand.

Christmas was a special day across all three ships, with special meals, Christmas caroling by various choirs and choral groups and generally a relaxing day for all to enjoy themselves. We fortunately received several big mail drops within days of Christmas, and there were packages stacked head high, so it certainly looked as if most of your mail got through in time.

As we start our journey back home, please remember several important pieces of information: The 22<sup>nd</sup> MEU (SOC) remains an operational unit even as we begin our transit home. Any projected arrival dates you may hear are only estimations and may change. You will receive up to date information from your Key Volunteers as to return times and places. Please use your Key Volunteers to confirm or deny any rumors you may hear. As we get closer to returning home, the rumors will pick up in volume. As hard as it is, remain flexible and patient and we will have your Marine or Sailor back to you as soon as possible.

I remain immensely proud of the achievements and professional performance of the Marines and Sailors of CLB-22, and am proud to be a part of this great battalion. I encourage you to continue visiting the 22<sup>nd</sup> MEU (SOC) website at [www.22meu.usmc.mil](http://www.22meu.usmc.mil) for further details and photographs of the Battalion's events as they are posted during the deployment.

If you should have any concerns, questions or just need some moral support during our deployment, I encourage you to contact your Key Volunteer, Family Readiness Staff Non-commissioned Officer, our family hotline or this website ([www.22meu.usmc.mil](http://www.22meu.usmc.mil)) to obtain the up-to-date information you need. Please keep in mind that official and factual information regarding the Battalion's movements, activities and operations will come solely from the 22<sup>nd</sup> MEU (SOC) Commanding Officer through me. Information sourced from me will only be delivered through the channels mentioned previously.

Thanks again for your prayers and support. My best wishes to all the families and friends back home.

### **SERGEANT MAJOR**

Families,

I hope the holidays have been good to everyone. A new year has come upon us followed by a new mission-- to make a safe and speedy transit home to you all. The last five months have brought the Marines and Sailors to a number of countries that I am sure they are all excited to tell you about after we return. We have finished a large portion of equipment wash downs that are required before we leave this side of the world and now we have changed into our seasonal green utilities. These are all milestones that the Marines and Sailors have been looking forward to for some time. The last few weeks of deployment on ship will be bring a busy schedule of post deployment classes in order to assist our Battalion in the

transitions back to life in the states. I am sure everyone at home is excited about the Marines and Sailors return home as much as we are. As this is our last newsletter, I want to say "Thank You" in advance, for supporting your Marines and Sailors over the past 6 months and more. Without the strong backing from those at home and something to look forward to, our assignments would have seemed impossible. You helped provide the light at the end of the tunnel for this unit. Be proud of your Marines and Sailors, we are.

### **FOOD SERVICE TEAM**

I would like to start by wishing everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! We are officially at our 31 day



marker and we have been busier then ever. We still continue to support the ships operations while a few of us were able to escape the clutches of the galley monster and participate in a community relations project in Djibouti. Where we built well covers, painted a school and even played a little soccer game with the children. We also got to enjoy some great views on our way out to the Villages. Once we returned back to the ship we continued to support all operation to include the 24 hour wash down Ops we conducted onboard the ship. We were able to receive mail the day prior to Christmas and on the following day we prepared a huge Christmas feast for the



ships' crew. We all are counting the days until we can hold our loved ones in our arms once more. Once again thank you for all your support!

Semper Fidelis, SSgt J. A. West



### **MAINTENANCE PLATOON**

To the Family, Friends and loved ones of Maintenance Platoon, we hope you all enjoyed the Christmas Holidays and Santa found everyone in good spirits. Your BIG Christmas Present will be home before you know it.

Since the last news letter several Maintenance Platoon personnel participated in community relation projects and a

training exercise in the country of Djibouti.

The personnel got to mingle with the local Djiboutians and learned a lot about their culture. The Marines worked hard on projects that will provide the basic services that we take for granted. One of the projects involved replacing a dilapidated water system with above ground water tanks. Other Marines helped a local school paint class rooms and repair class room items that were not working.

Maintenance Platoon's Wrecker Section and motor transport contact crew supported a training exercise called Image Nautilus



which involved Infantry Marines who cross trained with the Djibouti Military. Besides the hot weather and desert like conditions, the Marines enjoyed training with a foreign military and learned a lot about the Djiboutians.

While sitting off the coast of Djibouti, the Marines took advantage of that time to conduct agriculture equipment inspection wash downs aboard the USS Gunston Hall. The Marines worked very hard for three days in 24 hour shifts to accomplish the mission. The fruits of their labor will pay huge dividends for next months final wash down before our return home.



We hope all of you had a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Until next time may god bless all of you.

### **COMMUNICATIONS PLATOON**

Friends and Family of the Communications Platoon,

I am happy to report that all is well aboard the USS Gunston Hall this December. As the calendar gets ready to transition to a new year we all are beginning to count the days until our return. The month of December went by fast, particularly due to the events on the schedule that kept everyone busy. We spent the beginning of the month preparing and providing support for a Theater Cooperation Exercise in Djibouti. We had a small detachment of Marines from the Communications platoon to go ashore to

support operations on land while the



remainder of the platoon provided



assistance from the ship at sea. The exercise lasted for about ten days, and at the end, everyone was reunited back aboard ship. Upon their return, we spent several days just prior to the Christmas holiday cleaning and preparing equipment for agricultural customs inspections. These efforts proved to be well worth while and will allow future inspections to go a lot smoother and faster as we begin our return to North Carolina. We completed the inspection efforts just in time to enjoy a beautiful Christmas Day. The weather was picturesque with temperatures in the mid eighties and sunny skies that made it appear to be summer. Despite the weather, a traditional holiday meal was served and events such as caroling, gift



giving, and Marines just relaxing reading or watching movies filled the day. We thank you for all the letters, gifts, and care packages that we have received over the months and look forward to seeing you when we return next year.

Semper Fidelis  
Always Faithful to Family, God, Country,  
and Corps  
Captain  
Zaffrenarda King

### **MEDICAL PLATOON**

Happy Holidays to all of our families and friends. Early this month, HM3 Mixay, HM3 McLaughlin, and HA McCoy received their Enlisted Surface Warfare pins (ESWS)



for completing all the required activities and passing written and oral boards.

HM2 Pippenger took a little trip with a patient who had appendicitis to the nearest ship with surgical capabilities, and met us in Djibouti when we arrived there. While on route to the ship, he was solely responsible for this patient's care, and he did a great job. Over on the Gunston Hall, we had a rewarding December helping those less fortunate than ourselves. Six of us went ashore in Djibouti, a country in Africa, and helped the Marines with construction, beautification, and plumbing projects in the local towns. Three corpsmen went ashore to provide corpsmen support to a joint training evolution with the Djiboutian army. Once we got back, we gave everyone the flu shot and flu mist.

Thank you for your continued love and support as we come to an end of another month.

Respectfully,  
LT Marcia Ehrmann, Medical OIC



### **ENGINEER PLATOON**

Over the past month, the Engineer Platoon has participated in humanitarian assistance

efforts in Bangladesh, community relations projects in Djibouti, and conducted wash down of equipment on the Gunston-Hall. The Engineer Platoon has produced the past two Marine of the Quarter nominations, as well as the past two Meritorious Corporal Promotions. Congratulations to Cpl Ludlam and Cpl Dobbins.

Engineers from the Kearsarge went ashore to provide aid in Bangladesh at the end of November. They were able to transport and distribute water from the ship to the local population affected by the natural disaster. Their efforts helped relieve the suffering of thousands of people.

The Gunston-Hall was tasked with supporting Exercise Image Nautilus in Djibouti, Africa. The Engineer Platoon provided fuel and electrical support to the detachment conducting training with the Djiboutian Army. Meanwhile others participated in community relations projects in villages neighboring the U.S. base in Djibouti. This included installing a water storage tank, covering a well, and repairing interior wiring in a school. Their contributions greatly impacted the quality of life in these three villages. Still, everyone wished we could have done more.

As we prepare to send the advance party home and plan for wash down, we continue to remain ready for whatever mission may be required. We appreciate everyone's support and look forward to reuniting with our families when the time comes.



## Cpl Kerby providing water in Bangladesh SUPPLY PLATOON

The month of December was no different than the other months when it came to work being done on or off the ship. Within the first couple of days of the month, the Gunston Hall was tasked to send a couple of Marines and Sailors ashore in Djibouti, Africa. Volunteers from each section of the CLB alongside the BLT departed the Gunston Hall via helo to Camp Lemonier. The CLB volunteers would assist the 3LAAD Battalion Marines Liaison to travel to pre-designated villages for community relations. The BLT Marines performed cross training with the Djiboutian Army in the field. Some of the task performed by the volunteers consisted of painting of school classrooms, electrical application by the Engineers, and the construction of a modified cover for an above-ground well. Shortly after arriving back to the Gunston Hall, The ship had an all hands wash down of vehicles and equipment. The wash down was conducted on the flight deck; and was performed within 5 days with twenty four hour shifts, to ensure a majority of the gear was qualified for inspection by the Navy. Christmas was just around the corner and everybody was in the Christmas spirit. The chow hall prepared a Christmas dinner enough for all the ships on deployment. Marines and Sailors could be seen around the ship wearing Santa hats or singing old Christmas carols. All personnel received a 10 dollar calling card to call family and loved ones to boost morale on Christmas Eve. All Marines and Sailors were relieved to hear that there was roughly a month left on the schedule but were also reminded that the MEU was flexible and could still be called upon to report to any situation.

## CHAPLAIN

Happy 2008! God has once again smiled upon his people and brought us out of and into a brand new year. Our Holiday season



aboard the USS Gunston-Hall has been a real blessing. December kicked off with a Community Relations Project in the Horn of Africa. Approximately 50 Marines and Sailors worked 3 days at 3 different locations in an effort to make the lives of others a little better. Our Marine and Sailors painted, installed electrical boxes, built roofs, and even found a little time to play soccer with the children. It was a great experience and a blessing to be God's hand and feet on earth.



*"If a man shuts his ears to the cry of the poor, he too will cry out and not be answered."*

-Proverbs 21:13

On Christmas Day, a few Marines and Sailors joined their voices together to spread a little holiday choir throughout the day. We conducted a concert on the enlisted mess deck and performed in both the officer and chief mess areas. We had a great time and lives were touched in a special way. Just for a moment, we were able to help our fellow service members forget they were deployed.



Along with our Daily Devotions, Weekly Bible Studies, Sunday Morning and Christmas Day Worship Services, the Command Religious Program has implemented a weekly marriage class to offer real-life marriage tools to help shore up the foundation of marriage. Participation is good and I can tell by the question and discussion period that the attendees are growing.

I want you to be aware of the wonderful retreat opportunities that are available to our families. These retreats are free of charge and are held for married couples, singles, pre-teens, and teens. If you are interested in attending or sending a family member, please call 450-1668 or visit the Camp Lejeune CREDO website at <http://www.mccslejeune.com/credo.html>.

In closing, I received a letter from a friend written by an unknown author that really hits the nail on the head when it comes to the challenges of being a military spouse. Although the letter is addressed to the gender of women, it nonetheless is equally true for the military husband. I have included a copy of this letter. Read and enjoy. God Bless.

Dear Military Wife,  
I am an American woman that has no idea what is going on in the military other than

what I hear on the news. I have never had to let go of someone so that they could go fight for people that they didn't know, people that sometimes do not appreciate or understand what they are fighting for. I have never had a sleepless night of worry because of a report that another bomb has exploded and I still haven't heard from my husband. I have never had to wait for months on end to hold the one that I loved so. I have never had to tell my children that daddy wasn't coming home tonight because he was so far away fighting for something that they aren't yet old enough to understand. I have never had to hold my head high and suppress the tears as I hear that it will be at least another six months of separation before my loved one gets to come home. I have never had to deal with a holiday away from the one that I thought I would share every day of my life with. And I have never had to feel the panic raising in my heart at the sound of a ringing phone or knock at the door for fear that it is the news that everyone is terrified of getting. For the reasons listed above, I can not tell you that I understand how you feel. I can not tell you that you must be strong. I can not say that you shouldn't be angry, because you "knew what you were getting into when you married a military man". I can not say these things because I have never had to walk in your shoes. What I can say for certain is that because of your unselfish acts of bravery and your husband's willingness to stand up for those who see him as "just another soldier" - - I will never have to walk in your shoes. I do understand that as a military wife you are expected to uphold a certain amount of control, but I never understood how you could do it, until now. I have figured out that you are not like other women. You are of a special breed. You have a strength within you that holds life together in the darkest of hours, a strength of which I will never possess. The faith you have is what makes you stand out in a crowd; it makes you glow with emotion and swell with pride at the mention of The

United States of America. You are a special lady, a wonderful partner and a glorious American.

#### S-4

News from the S-4 front has been quiet as of late. The collected Marines of our eclectic shop have had it relatively easy since embarking back on ship following sustainment training in Kuwait. With the exception, of course, of a few from the Gunston Hall who both volunteered and were selected to participate in the training exercise and Community Relations projects in Djibouti.



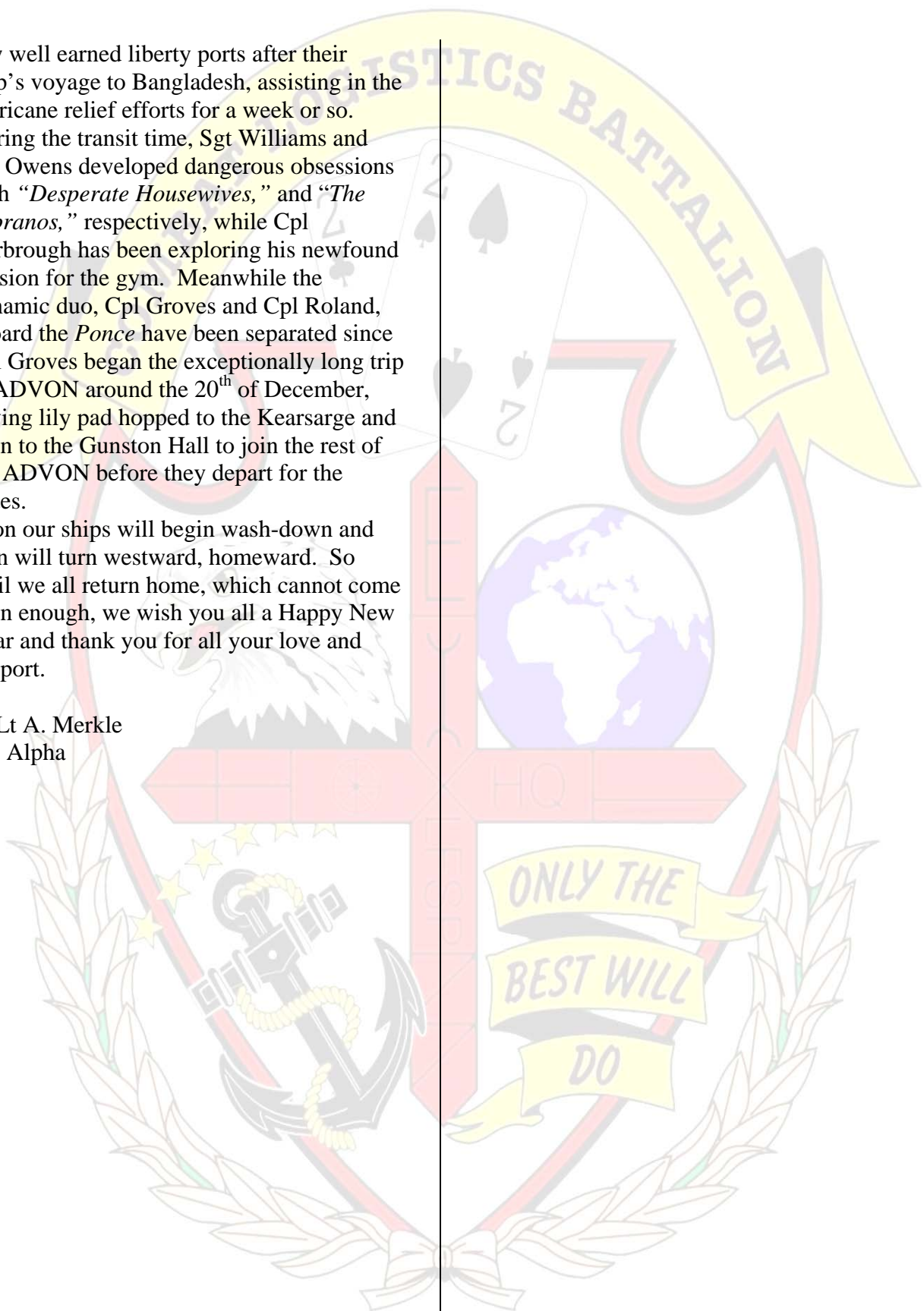
Sergeant Volk received a Certificate of Appreciation for his exceptional service volunteering at the various villages in Djibouti where they helped improve the villagers' ways of life. In addition, LCpl Council and LCpl Calpotura did an outstanding job as part of the Mobile Combat Logistics Detachment supporting the BLT's training out in the wild parts of Djibouti. The rest of the boys remained quite comfortable on board the Gunston Hall enjoying the shorter lines at chow and the increased elbow room in the gym while not having to suffer the daily routine of the malaria medications for all who went ashore. Life for the *Kearsarge* crew has been quiet under the careful watch of Captain Norris as they have been enjoying a



few well earned liberty ports after their ship's voyage to Bangladesh, assisting in the hurricane relief efforts for a week or so. During the transit time, Sgt Williams and Sgt Owens developed dangerous obsessions with "*Desperate Housewives*," and "*The Sopranos*," respectively, while Cpl Yarbrough has been exploring his newfound passion for the gym. Meanwhile the dynamic duo, Cpl Groves and Cpl Roland, aboard the *Ponce* have been separated since Cpl Groves began the exceptionally long trip to ADVON around the 20<sup>th</sup> of December, having lily pad hopped to the Kearsarge and soon to the Gunston Hall to join the rest of the ADVON before they depart for the states.

Soon our ships will begin wash-down and then will turn westward, homeward. So until we all return home, which cannot come soon enough, we wish you all a Happy New Year and thank you for all your love and support.

1stLt A. Merkle  
S-4 Alpha



# **HORN OF AFRICA**

## **Community Relations Project (COMREL)**





## IMAGE NAUTILUS

